

Horizon 2020 and ways of being smart

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On 11 December 2013, the European Commission will launch the first call for proposals for the 8th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, called "Horizon 2020", a plan that is set to run for seven years and to help in "improving the conditions for research and development, in particular with the aim of raising combined public and private investment levels in this sector to 3% of GDP." What lies hidden behind the curtain is, above all, an economic war that should be stirring all researchers to action.

Background and purpose

On 17 June 2010, European Union (EU) heads of state and government, meeting in the European Council, decided upon the *Europe 2020* strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, replacing the Lisbon strategy. A major goal is to open EU borders more widely to trade and investment, leading in turn to a proliferation of free trade deals. Last July, talks began with the United States on a trans-Atlantic trade and investment treaty. One result of this is an escalation in economic confrontation with all of the world's regions and countries. This produces policies that involve a sharpening of economic weapons and a greater submission of human activities to a broad mobilisation for defending and strengthening Europe's economic territory. The policies of the EU and of its member countries are increasingly focused on this state of economic war.

One of the utmost economic weapons is innovation, understood to be at the service of business, to which the research policies of the EU and of its member states continue to be oriented. *Horizon 2020* is a key part of the *Europe 2020* strategy, as made evident by the adjective *smart* appearing first in this strategy.

Widespread influence

The deliberate choice by the EU and its member states to submit their people to exacerbated free trade and therefore to international economic war was not debated by Europeans in general. Are we to believe that these issues are too technical and too complex to be decided upon by the people? On the other hand, the lobbies of multinational companies were in the thick of things, promoting their wishes followed and defending their shareholders' interests. In Brussels, more than 10,000 people have the job of facilitating, implementing and developing relationships and links between large corporations and the European political establishment (commissioners, civil servants, parliamentarians, national delegations, etc.).¹ This relationship is directly at issue in determining European policy as a whole, especially in the choice of ultra-free trade.

And then, with economic war forming the core of any policy, these links will be strengthened and made more pervasive, especially in outlining and implementing research policies, reaching from the European level all the way to individual establishments and to research itself.

From FPRTD to FPRI

The 7th Framework Programme on Research and Technological Development (FPRTD) is coming to an end. With *Horizon 2020*, **the European Commission has replaced technological development with innovation**. What we see now is a Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FPRI). This shift in language marks a step in a particularly sensitive shift in research policy since the 6th FPRTD, launched in 2002, two years after the Lisbon strategy was outlined. In 2011, as the European Commission worked on drafting an initial version of the *Horizon 2020* programme, the official site of the European Union specified its orientation:

"The ultimate goal is to maximise research and innovative financed by the EU, for sustainable growth and employment, as well as to address the major challenges facing Europe, such as climate change, food and energy security, health and aging of the population."

"This must be achieved by creating a coherent set of instruments along the entire 'innovation chain', starting with basic research and leading to additions to the market for innovative products and services and also to support for non-technological innovation, for example with respect to product design and marketing."

In February 2013, the heads of state and government of EU member countries, meeting in the European Council, the body that sets the Union's orientations, decided with regard to *Horizon 2020* that: "All policies will be called upon to increase competitiveness." This message leaves no room for ambiguity.

Finally, even though some space is provided for basic research, this is clearly intended to serve profit-oriented innovation. While some areas of human and social sciences are mentioned, this is essentially from a utilitarian and market perspective. Though the major challenges facing society are taken into consideration (not doing so would have been madness), it is through the prism of business demand and market potential.

Regionalisation

The same February 2013 European Council meeting also decided to “strengthen regional capacity in research and innovation”. Simultaneously, two items of legislation were introduced in France aimed at strengthening and transforming the role of regions, intended to become the basic territorial units in international economic confrontation. Research, in its requisitioned form, will focus on providing “weapons”² to regional companies, which in turn will be called upon to expand internationally.

First, the bill on *decentralisation and reform of public action* requires regional councils to adopt, every five years, “a regional outline for economic development, innovation and internationalisation after consultation with the government representative in the region, local authorities, major cities and consular bodies”^{3, 4}. The regional councils must also oversee “the consistency of the action programs of competitiveness clusters⁵ with the regional outlines for economic development, innovation and internationalisation.”⁶. We emphasise that employees and their representative organisations, unlike employers and non-salaried professionals, are not mentioned in the legislative text and are deprived of any status.

Meanwhile, the Fioraso law of 23 July 2013 reorganises higher education and research into “academic or inter-academic” regional structures, except in the Paris and the surrounding area, where it will take a different form. This makes the legislation include the goals of technology transfer, economic competitiveness and attractiveness of local, regional and national territories, to which higher education and research were already contributing but upon which they must now focus.

A national legislative puzzle is thereby instituted, in full accordance with the European *Horizon 2020* programme and within the broader framework of the *Europe 2020* “smart growth” strategy.

Specialisation strategy

The European Commission has outlined new conditions for providing financing under the cohesion policy (the EU’s second biggest area of spending, at about 50 billion euros annually), establishing Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) for countries and regions, linked explicitly to the *Horizon 2020* programme. In November 2012, the French government published the *Guide pour la préparation des stratégies de spécialisation intelligente des régions françaises* (Guide for preparing French regions’ smart specialisation strategies)⁷. Here are the first paragraphs of the summary at the start of this document, followed by a passage further down in the text:

➤➤ **“The “S3 concept” is rooted in European Union debates on competitiveness.** The mid-2000s were the time when the S3 concept entered European debate, at the initiative of the *Knowledge for Growth* expert panel mandated by the DG of Research to report on the competitiveness gaps between the European Union and the United States. These experts saw reducing this gap as requiring “**smart specialisation of member states and regions in an integrated European research area**”.

➤➤ **“Smart specialisation” is viewed by the Commission as a key lever in the cohesion policy’s contribution to Europe 2020**, the new strategy for coordinating the economic policies of the 27 member states, launched in June 2010 to create conditions for ‘smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’. ‘Smart specialisation’ is a regional version of economists’ and geographers’ innovation theories of ‘competitive advantage’ (Porter), the ‘value chain’ and economies of scale in a globalised economy (Krugman).”

➤➤ **“S3 is a selection process** in the context of innovation and industrial policies at the regional level. It aims to set priorities and focus resources on a limited number of areas of activity and technological sectors in which a region has a *competitive advantage* at the global level and that are likely to generate new innovative activities that give these regions a medium-term *competitive advantage* in the world economy.”

“S3 must favour innovation in all its forms, not only technological innovation resulting in the production of new goods or services but also innovation based on business practice, innovation marketing, and process or organisational change. It must enable regions to acquire a ‘critical mass’, alone or through cooperative efforts, in a few targeted areas, thereby raising their international visibility through positioning in niches of world markets and on global value chains.”

The duty to warn and resist

The Larousse dictionary defines intelligence, or smartness, as an ability to understand and to grasp through thinking. Notions of *smart growth* and *smart specialisation* have little to do with smartness. On the contrary, they play a role in destroying the tools and foundations of thinking, from the heritage of language to research.

Economic war is devastating, as is any war. Does it not give rise to a breakdown of smartness, as insidious as it is searing?

Researchers have an individual and collective responsibility to warn and resist.

Marc Delepouve

National Secretary of the SNESUP-FSU, responsible for the international sector

1. Readers may consult Belén Balanya, Ann Doherty, Olivier Hoedeman, Adam Ma'anit, Erik Wesselius, *Europe inc. : liaisons dangereuses entre institutions et milieux d'affaires européens*, Collection Contre-feux, Agone, Marseille, 2000.

2. *L'enseignement et la recherche, nos armes pour demain*, remarks by Geneviève Fioraso, published by *Les Échos* newspaper, reissued on the ministry's website.

3. "Consular bodies" consist of the Chambre régionale de Commerce et d'Industrie, the Chambre régionale de métiers et de l'artisanat and the Chambre régionale d'agriculture, made up respectively of officers elected by business people, artisans and farmers.

4. Section 2 of the legislation.

5. Competitiveness clusters, in essence, group businesses, research bodies and universities.

6. Section 2 of the legislation.

7. *Guide pour la préparation des stratégies de spécialisation intelligente des régions françaises*, November 2012. French government website: <http://www.europe-en-france.gouv.fr/Centre-de-ressources/Etudes-rapports-et-documentation/Guide-pour-la-preparation-des-strategies-de-specialisation-intelligente-des-regions-francaises>